

Message Text

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 13719

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UK (NI), EI

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: WHITE LAW ANNOUNCES FORMATION
OF EXECUTIVE BODY

SUMMARY: NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY OF STATE WHITE LAW
MADE A LONG AWAITED ANNOUNCEMENT TO COMMONS ON NOVEMBER
22 THAT AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED ON THE FORMATION OF
NI EXECUTIVE. HIS STATEMENT CAME AT THE END OF SEVEN
WEEKS OF INTENSIVE DISCUSSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF
OF PARTIES IN THE NI ASSEMBLY WHO WERE WILLING TO TRY
TO IMPLEMENT THE CONSTITUTION ACT: THE ALLIANCE PARTY,
THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOR PARTY AND THE ULSTER
UNIONIST PARTY. THE 11-MAN EXECUTIVE DESIGNATE (IT WILL
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FORMALLY COME INTO EXISTENCE ONLY AFTER SEVERAL MORE

STAGES HAVE BEEN PASSED), WILL COMPRISE SIX MEMBERS OF THE UUP, FOUR OF THE SDLP AND ONE OF ALLIANCE. BRIAN FAULKNER, UUP, WILL BE THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE DEPUTY WILL BE JERRY FITT OF THE SDLP. WHITELAW'S ANNOUNCEMENT WAS VERY WARMLY RECEIVED BY BOTH SIDES OF THE HOUSE. HE WARNED AGAINST TOO GREAT EXPECTATIONS, EMPHASIZING THAT THERE WERE FURTHER CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED AND THAT PROGRESS IN ESTABLISHING PEACE AGAIN IN NI AND IN BUILDING A NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURE COULD ONLY COME ABOUT AS A RESULT OF MUCH HARD WORK AND WILL TO COMPROMISE. COMMENT: WHITELAW'S ACHIEVEMENT IN GETTING THROUGH THIS FIRST HURDLE ON THE LONG HARD ROAD TO POLITICAL COOPERATION IN NI IS TRULY EXCEPTIONAL. A SOBER AWARENESS OF THE TENUOUS NATURE OF WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR, HOWEVER, IS PRUDENT AND WAS EVIDENT IN THE REACTIONS OF MP'S AND THE LONDON PRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN HIS STATEMENT, WHITELAW NOTED THAT AGREEMENT ON THE FORMATION OF THE EXECUTIVE HAD ONLY COME ABOUT AS THE RESULT OF ACHIEVING A LARGE MEASURE OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PARTIES ON MAJOR POLICY ISSUES. WHITELAW NOTED THAT IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN UNDERSTOOD AMONG THE PARTIES THAT IT WOULD BE IN NO ONE'S INTEREST TO FORM AN AGREEMENT UNLESS THERE WAS AGREEMENT ON ALL THE ISSUES UNDER DISCUSSION. THE MAJOR MATTER OUTSTANDING WAS THE COUNCIL OF IRELAND. THIS INVOLVED THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AND WHITELAW SAID HE HOPED THAT A PRELIMINARY TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE COULD BE HELD TO DISCUSS HOW THIS COUNCIL MIGHT BE SET UP. ONCE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED ON THIS, THE FORMAL APPOINTMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COULD TAKE PLACE.

2. WHITELAW SAID THAT IN REACHING AGREEMENT OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE, THE ORIGINAL PROPOSED MEMBERSHIP OF 12 HAD PROVED TOO RESTRICTIVE. IT HAD BEEN AGREED, SUBJECT TO THE WILL OF COMMONS, TO HAVE AN 11-MEMBER EXECUTIVE (UUP-6, SDLP-4, ALLIANCE-1) WHICH WOULD BE SUPPLEMENTED BY 4 ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS (UUP-1, SDLP-2 AND ALLIANCE-1). THE DIVISION OF POSITIONS WOULD BE:

CHIEF EXECUTIVE DESIGNATE, BRIAN FAULKNER UUP
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DEPUTY, GERRY FITT, SDLP
LEGAL OFFICER, OLIVER NAPIER, ALLIANCE
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE--UNIONIST
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE--SDLP
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES--
SDLP
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND
PLANNING--SDLP

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT--UNIONIST
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION--UNIONIST
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE--UNIONIST
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SERVICES--UNIONIST
CHIEF WHIP--UNIONIST
OFFICE OF MANPOWER SERVICES--ALLIANCE
OFFICES OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS--SDLP
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE PLANNING AND COORDINATION--
SDLP

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3. COMMENTARY ON THE COUNCIL OF IRELAND. WHITELAW SAID
THAT IT SEEMED HELPFUL, AT THIS NEW STAGE, TO SAY WHAT
PROPOSITIONS ABOUT A COI THE PARTIES INVOLVED WERE AGREED

TO, SINCE THEIR SUPPORT WAS ESSENTIAL. "IT HAD BECOME CLEAR IN HIS TALKS THAT THERE WAS A GENERAL WISH THAT A COUNCIL OF IRELAND SHOULD BE CONFINED TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF IRELAND--THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON IT. THIS WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT REGARDING DEVOLVED SUBJECTS, ALTHOUGH ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE NECESSARY TO SAFEGUARD THEIR INTERESTS IN FINANCE AND OTHER RESERVED SUBJECTS. THE COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIST THE GOVERNMENT THOUGHT, NOT ONLY OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND

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EXECUTIVE--AT GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL--BUT ALSO, ON A SEPARATE ADVISORY AND CONSULTATIVE LEVEL, OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE PARTIES FROM THE DAIL AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY. THE COUNCIL SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN SECRETARIAT. IN ORDER THAT DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL SHOULD CARRY THE GREATEST POSSIBLE DEGREE OF SUPPORT AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH ITS DECISIONS AT GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL SHOULD BE TAKEN ON THE BASIS OF UNANIMITY. THE GOVERNMENT FELT THE COUNCIL SHOULD BE ABLE TO PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN RELATION TO CERTAIN SUBJECTS RESERVED FOR THE TIME BEING TO HM GOVERNMENT. IF THIS WERE TO HAPPEN HM GOVERNMENT WOULD NEED TO BE REPRESENTED ON THE COUNCIL AT LEAST WHEN THESE SUBJECTS WERE UNDER DISCUSSION. WHAT BRITAIN'S ROLE SHOULD BE AND HOW UNITED KINGDOM INTERESTS SHOULD BE REPRESENTED WERE MATTERS WHICH NEEDED TO BE AGREED, BUT THERE WAS SCOPE HERE WHICH COULD BRING GREAT ADVANTAGE TO BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH, PARTICULARLY IN SECURITY."

4. WHITELAW WENT ON TO SAY THAT HIS TALKS WITH THE PARTIES HAD COVERED OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE PEOPLE OF NI:

A. THE GOVERNMENT HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY WOULD CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE POLICE SERVICE.

B. ALTHOUGH IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S AIM TO ACHIEVE THE ENDING OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE IN WHICH THE ARMY COULD BE PROGRESSIVELY WITHDRAWN FROM ITS PRESENT ROLE, NO SIMPLE SET OF PROPOSALS WERE LIKELY TO BRING THIS ABOUT. TIME WOULD BE NECESSARY AND THE FULL COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC WOULD BE ESSENTIAL.

C. THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO END DETENTION, BUT COULD NOT RELEASE THOSE DETAINED UNTIL THE SECURITY SITUATION IMPROVED. AS AN EARNEST OF THIS INTENTION, WHITELAW SAID HE HOPED TO USE HIS POWERS OF SELECTIVE

RELEASE AND INTENDED TO DO SO IN TIME FOR A NUMBER OF
DETAINEES TO BE RELEASED BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

5. WHITELAW CONCLUDED HIS STATEMENT "LET US ALL BE
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CLEAR (HE SAID) THIS IS NOT A TIME FOR SELF-CONGRATULA-
TION IN THIS HOUSE. WE HAVE SET OUT UPON A VERY DIF-
FICULT OPERATION, INDEED. THERE ARE THOSE IN THIS HOUSE
AND OUTSIDE WHO ARE CONVINCED, AND INDEED ARE DETERMINED,
THAT WE SHOULD FAIL. ...WE HAVE MADE A GOOD START. I
APPLAUDE THE STATESMANSHIP OF THOSE WHO, IN SPITE OF
THEIR DIFFERENCES IN THE PAST, ARE NOW TURNING TO WORK
TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE GOOD OF THEIR WHOLE COMMUNITY.
THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND, IN THE REST
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, WHO
WILL WISH THEM EVERY SUCCESS."

6. COMMENT: INITIAL REACTION TO THE WHITELAW ANNOUNCE-
MENT HAS BEEN VERY FAVORABLE. MP'S OF BOTH PARTIES AND A
ALL THE PRESS ARE AWARE THAT EVEN REACHING THIS STAGE
ON THE ROAD TO POLITICAL PROGRESS IN NI IS A MAJOR
ACHIEVEMENT FOR WHICH THE PARTIES INVOLVED, AS WELL AS
WHITELAW, DESERVE GREAT CREDIT. IT WOULD BE
UNDERSTANDABLE IF THIS ACHIEVEMENT LED TO TOO HIGH
EXPECTATIONS. HOWEVER, WHITELAW'S SOBER ADMONITION
ABOUT THE OBSTACLES AHEAD, TOGETHER WITH A LONG BRITISH
EXPERIENCE OF THE "IRISH" PROBLEM, SEEM TO HAVE
RESTRAINED MOST SUCH TENDENCIES ON THIS OCCASION.

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